

CONVERGENCE-ENABLED DVD AND WEB SYSTEM

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application is based on and claims priority from U.S. Provisional Application

5 Serial Number 60/129,724, filed on April 16, 1999 and hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

10 The present invention is directed to interactive multimedia systems. More particularly, the invention is directed to DVD systems which are able to selectively control the processing of content from the World Wide Web and the like, and to web-based systems which are able to selectively access DVD systems and the like.

2. Background of the Related Art

15 Digital Versatile Discs (or variously Digital Video Discs or DVDs) and the World Wide Web (WWW) are extremely powerful interactive multimedia tools. However, they both have their drawbacks. Although DVDs are capable of storing large amounts of high-quality video and audio data, once they are manufactured their content is essentially static; it cannot be changed, updated or personalized. Also, the limited interactivity does not meet the demands of many of
20 today's computer-literate users. Further, although the WWW is dynamic and rapidly changing, it is not capable of providing high-quality multimedia content in real time for many users due to limited bandwidth.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention has been made with the above problems of the prior art in mind, and a first object of the present invention is to provide a system for integrating static and interactive multimedia delivery systems such as DVD systems and the WWW.

5 It is another object of the present invention to provide a multimedia delivery system which is interactive and easily modifiable.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide a highly interactive and dynamic multimedia system which is capable of providing high-quality multimedia content.

10 The above objects are achieved according to an aspect of the present invention by providing a system which integrates a DVD system and WWW content or similarly presented information, such as HTML-formatted material. Universal Resource Locator (URL) information corresponding to sites or media streams accessible via the WWW or another content delivery system are stored in fields within the DVD data. When a user actuates a DVD element that has a corresponding URL the information from that site is displayed in a web browser to enhance the DVD viewing experience. Conversely, the DVD system can be controlled when the user actuates HTML information from a web page or the like. This arrangement provides for two-way control, i.e., HTML is able to control DVD content and vice-versa. Having the WWW information embedded in the DVD brings a number of benefits, perhaps the foremost of which is the ability to write a "one size fits all" template web page that can interrogate the DVD for URL information and present WWW content corresponding to the URL information and synchronized with the DVD content.

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the preferred embodiment; and

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PRESENTLY PREFERRED EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENT

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In use, the browser 10 displays a web page 30 defined by, e.g., HTML code, and stored at a site specified by the user to the browser 10. The browser 10 may also display a separate or integrated playback field 40, i.e., a window, frame or other field) for video content from DVD system 20 or streamed content from the WWW, with synchronized audio from the DVD 20 or
5 streamed content played on the computer's speakers as is known in the art (see FIG. 2). Preferably, the playback field 40 is generated by a media player 80, such as the Microsoft Windows Media Player, with a call thereto embedded in HTML code for the displayed web page as is known in the art. Other multimedia players may also be adapted for this purpose as well.

As is known in the art, DVD systems may be configured to display buttons and the
10 like to enable a user to navigate the DVD 70 and access various portions thereof. In a dedicated DVD player, these buttons are accessed by a cursor controlled by cursor direction keys on the DVD player's console, remote control or the like; however, when a DVD is played in the computer using the media player 80, the buttons may be accessed by positioning or clicking the computer's mouse cursor on the buttons displayed by the media player 80 as is common with graphical user interfaces
15 as shown in Step 110 of FIG. 3. When this occurs, the media player 80 generates a Windows event message such as `EC_DVD_Button_Change` signifying that a particular button has been selected or actuated and providing its number (Step 120). In the preferred embodiment, this message is intercepted by an event script 50 which calls `DVDTextInfoParser` 60 (Step 130), a custom object that uses the current DVD button (provided by the media player 80 via
20 `EC_DVD_Button_Change`) and information extracted from a particular field within the DVD 70 corresponding to that button as described in greater detail below in order to obtain a URL (Step 140) that can be accessed by the web browser 10 and displayed on the web page 30 (Step 150).

More specifically, as is known in the art the media player 80 preferably generates information on the current status of the DVD 70 as part of its playback process. The DVD 70 is preferably authored to cause the DVD system 20 to write the index of the currently displayed menu into a specific General DVD parameter (GPRM) by, e.g., inserting DVD commands at strategic
5 places into the DVD data set during its compilation. An example of a DVD authoring system which automatically performs this task is described in United States Patent Application No. 09/010,267 to Brodersen et al., incorporated herein by reference. A commercially available system which automatically performs this task is the DVD Maestro system of Spruce Technologies of San Jose, CA.

10 In Step 100, the media player 80 will then emulate this register information (the GPRMs) when playing DVDs; for example, the method in which the windows media player does this is explained in Microsoft's documentation for the program. The menu index thus obtained from the GPRMs in Step 142 can be used in Step 144 as an index into corresponding fields in the DVD's TXTDT_MG structure, also read in by the media player 80, which contains URLs stored
15 there by the DVD authoring system. As detailed in the DVD specification, the TXTDT_MG structure within the DVD data includes various predefined fields holding specified information such as producer name, vocalist name, languages and the like, and a provider-unique field designated for such use may be used to store the URL. Thus, by monitoring the designated GPRM, an outside program such as the event script 50 can reliably derive the appropriate URL from the
20 current menu index and the current button.

For systems using Microsoft DirectShow, the DVDTextInfoParser object (based on an ATL COM interface named IDVDTextInfoParser) can preferably facilitate playback of DVD 70 using the DirectShow DVDGraphBuilder interface; however, other

techniques also will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art. As described above, DVDTextInfoParser then accesses the DirectShow IDVDInfo interface to read in text data. This technique is used in the preferred embodiment; however, other techniques can be used with platforms on which DirectShow is not available; for example, the TXTDT_MG structure can be
5 directly read in from the DVD 70.

Preferably, event script 50 is a Java script; however, alternative implementations such as a Microsoft Visual Basic Script may be used instead. Also, DVDTextInfoParser 60 is preferably an ActiveX control using an ATL COM interface; however, other program implementations may be used as well. Further, although DVDTextInfoParser 60 may access
10 the DVD system 20 each time a URL is needed, in the preferred embodiment it preferably reads the TXTDT_MG structure into memory each time a DVD 70 is initialized, and references the information in memory. This is because the Windows Media Player used as the media player 80 in the preferred embodiment does not work well with other objects simultaneously accessing interfaces to the same DVD 70. If this problem is resolved in future versions of DirectShow, the
15 access-as-needed scheme might work equally well.

Thus, a "one size fits all" template web page could be made in which a field 40 displays DVD playback while a window 30 displays web content. When the user selects a button, the media player 80 generates an EC_Button_Change event which is acted upon by the event script 50 to call DVDTextInfoParser 60 based on the button number and menu title index
20 number to obtain the corresponding URL from the DVD's TXTDT_MG structure. The content corresponding to the retrieved URL is then displayed in the web page 30. Similarly, when an EC_Domain_Change or EC_Chapter_Change event occurs, DVDTextInfoParser 60 could be called to check for corresponding URLs and synchronize the web content in web page 30

to the current chapter displayed in playback field 40. If the corresponding URL content contains a reference to streaming content, the streaming video can be displayed in combination with or in place of the DVD content.

In a similar manner, HTML code in the web page 30 may make calls to the event script 50 or a similar script to retrieve the URLs stored in TXTDT_MG as will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art. These may then be displayed in the web page 30 as hyperlinks, controls or the like to enable the browser to display web content 30 corresponding to URLs in the DVD 70. Thus, rather than or in conjunction with controlling the system by accessing features of the DVD display 40 as described above, the system may be controlled by accessing features of the web page 30.

The above description of the preferred embodiment has been presented for explanation purposes only, and the present invention is not so limited. Modifications, embellishments and alternative implementations of the invention will be readily apparent those skilled in the art and are encompassed by the invention.

For example, in the preferred embodiment the URLs associated with the DVD menu buttons have been references to web pages or streaming video; however, the URLs may point to other types of resources and rely on the system to call appropriate helper applications; for example, a URL might point to a file in Adobe Acrobat PDF format, so that when the browser accesses it the Adobe Acrobat reader will automatically be called to display it. Even further, the URLs need not point to data files, but can also refer to programs which will be played when the corresponding buttons are actuated or the like.

Further, numerous practical applications of the invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art. For example, information on events and webcasts could be distributed in

the form of an electronic magazine. Consumers would receive the electronic magazine in the mail on DVD. The DVD can combine rich video content of the various artists and events, high quality samples of content (webcasts, etc.) to be purchased, interviews, concert information and the ability to purchase associated merchandise all on one disc. Since the disc uses high quality graphical elements that are assembled from an HTML template stored on a separate server, the viewer's experience can change as often as the DVD distributor wishes. In fact, different content may be served to different consumers based on parameters in the URLs. The fact that one disc can be a totally different experience for everyone that views it makes the system a highly flexible and effective advertising medium.

In another potential application, a DVD containing a business or sales training program produced to take advantage of many DVD features, such as Multiple Language Tracks and Multiple Camera Angles, could be distributed worldwide. Viewers could interact directly with the content and be qualified based on their performance. The DVDs would be usable at any time as an offline reference.

In yet another potential application, a professor works with his AV team to author several DVDs to be distributed to the students to take with them. The student may then view lectures and seminars from top professors from around the world in their own home. Classwork and tests could be administered remotely via each professor's website. Scheduled class hours with chat boards would give the student the ability to refer to every discussion that ever took place at any given time, and the DVDs could be saved as future references.

Such variations and implementations are to be considered within the scope of the present invention.